

SEEING WHAT GOD WANTS ME TO SEE 40 Days In The Word – Part 3

Student Outline Excerpts from Rick Warren, Saddleback Christian Church

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever thought this: “I just never get anything out of the Bible. When I read it it’s just flat out boring. I don’t get anything out of it. It seems dry. I don’t understand it. It doesn’t make sense. I don’t know what the big deal about it is. It seems like a closed book to me.”

Part 3 lesson purpose is to explain why the Bible is a closed book to you and how God wants to open it up and how you can start seeing what God wants you to see. The fact is the Bible *is* a difficult book if you don’t understand the principle of **illumination**.

Part 1A and Part 1B, we talked about **inspiration**. The seven reasons you know that you can trust God’s Word, that this is not just a human book; it is the actual Word of God. It is God’s Word to us. And the seven reasons we know that.

Part 2 we looked at **foundation**. The seven reasons God gave his Word, what he wants to do with it in your life, how it makes a difference, what the Bible was given for.

Part 3, we’re going to look at the issue of **illumination**. Illumination has to do with light. The brighter the bulb in your lamp, the clearer you see. Brightness increases clarity. The more light, the more you can see.

This is true when it comes to God’s Word. The more light, the more enlightened your mind, the more illuminated your mind, the more you’re going to get out of God’s Word. It’s not just the Bible, it’s illumination.

WHAT IS ILLUMINATION?

1. Illumination is letting the Holy Spirit show me the meaning of God’s Word and how it applies to my life. **Illumination** is letting the Holy Spirit show me meaning of God’s Word and how it applies to my life.
2. Before Jesus went back to heaven he said, I’m going back to heaven after the resurrection, but I’m going to send my Spirit to live with you and live in you – the Holy Spirit. John 14 talks about that. One of the things that the Holy Spirit’s job is to do is to illuminate the Bible, help you see things in this book that you would not otherwise see. If you don’t have that, you’re going to miss a lot in the Bible.
3. It’s kind of like at Christmas time when you buy your kids all those gifts, a lot of the gifts says, “Batteries not included.” A toy with the battery not included is still a toy but it doesn’t have its full potential. Because you’ve got to have the power to make that little toy run.

4. And God says not only have I given you **revelation**, but I've given you **inspiration**. **That's the power to interpret, to understand, to see things you've never seen before.** This is the Holy Spirit's job. Yes, the Holy Spirit can speak to little old you.

5. John 14:26 *"Jesus said, 'The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.'"* He says he's going to teach you and remind you. What have I said to you? The Bible. That's what God has said to us, what Jesus said to us.

6. John 14:17 *"He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth."* It is the Holy Spirit who leads you to understand what the truth is in the Word of God.

7. John 16:15 *"...The Spirit will take from what is mine [That is the words of Jesus] and make it known to you."* It is the illumination of the revelation. It is God's Spirit saying, this is what this means in your mind as you read it that makes it known to you.

8. Ephesians 1:17 *"I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. [the Holy Spirit] The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God."* Circle the phrase **"Let you understand."** The Holy Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God. This is the "batteries included." This is the power part of revelation.

9. What is that text saying? This book is supernatural, not only in that it is God's Word, **but this is the only book you'll ever have where you can talk to the author while you're reading it.** You will never read any other book where you can talk to the author while you're reading it. That's called illumination. As you read this book say, "Lord, Holy Spirit, what does this mean? What does it mean to me? How can it make a difference in my life? How am I supposed to use this today?" Watch the Holy Spirit whispers in your ear, he puts thoughts, he puts impressions, he opens your eyes. He illuminates, he lightens. The light goes on in your mind – oh, that's what that's all about! You can ask, what does he mean here?

HOW DOES Illumination work?

1. Ephesians 1:18-19 explains it. *"I pray also that the eyes of your heart [you say, wait a minute, I've got eyes in my heart?] may be enlightened [illuminated] in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."*

a. First, circle the phrase **"the eyes of your heart."** What's he talking about there? When you were born physically everything you learn in life comes through the **five senses that God gave you**. When you were born God gave you five senses – hear, taste, touch, smell and feel. Everything you experience in your entire life for as long as you live you'll experience on earth through the five senses that God gave you – hear, touch, taste, smell, feel. If you don't have those, you don't experience anything. That's when you're physically born.

b. When you're spiritually born again, when you are reborn into God's family, when you are saved, when you become personally acquainted with God, when you develop a relationship with Jesus, when you are born again, God gives you a second set of senses and you get spiritual ears to hear some things you never heard before. And you get spiritual eyes, and all of a sudden you start to see some things about life you didn't see before. And all of a sudden you feel some things that you didn't feel before. These are the eyes of your heart, the spiritual senses.

c. You actually live in two worlds. There is the spiritual world which we cannot see, which is God and angels and all of that. Then there is the physical world which we can see.

d. Actually the spiritual world created the physical world. The spiritual world has lasted longer than the physical world. It will outlast the physical world. One day everything is going to vanish here. This building will crumble. This cup will fall apart, the table will decay, rust, whatever. Physical things don't last. They are temporary.

e. But God and his angels and the Spirit inside you is going to last forever. So actually the spiritual world is more real than the physical world. You just can't see it unless God opens your eyes to see things that you would not normally see. That's called illumination.

7. It says, *"I pray that the eyes of your heart [that's your spiritual eyes] will be enlightened..."* Circle **"enlightened."** That word in Greek is the word **photizo**. We get the word "photo" from it.

a. What is a photo? It is the image of light on a piece of paper or through digitization. It is an image of light. To enlighten means to shine the light on something.

b. What it means is when you're reading the Bible, and all of a sudden one day the light bulb comes on in your mind and you go "Bam! I've never seen that before!" It's the ah-ha moment! You go "Whoa! I've read that verse a lot of times but I've never seen that before. That's exactly what I needed. That's exactly what I needed today, right now, to encourage me, to help me to know which way to go. Wow! Ah-ha! Eureka! I've found it! I get it! Yes! I understand it!".....That is illumination.

c. For many of you that has never happened in your life as you've read the Bible. You just read words – blah-bah, blah-bah, blah-bah, blah-bah. And you'd never had one of those ah-ha! Wow! That's exactly what I needed. I needed that from the Bible! Wow! I've always wanted to know what the answer was and now I know! That's illumination. That's when the batteries are included. And you read the revelation and the Spirit does the illumination and you go, I get it!

d. For some of you that's happened infrequently. It's happened every once in a while. Part 3 is design to help you make this a regular part of your daily Bible reading so that more than just print on a piece of paper you're going to read the Bible and it's going to come alive. And you'll go, that is so good. That is wonderful. I never saw that before. I needed that. It's God speaking directly to me.

When that happens your spiritual eyes are opened. That's called illumination.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOD OPEN MY SPIRITUAL EYES?

Because when God begins to illuminate your mind and you learn how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, all of a sudden there are all kinds of really cool benefits in your life. You're going to want these.

When God opens my spiritual eyes, when I see things as he wants me to see them, number one:

1. I see the solution to my problem. That's the first thing that happens. I see the solution to my problem.

a. Bible Example is Genesis 21. It's the story of Sarah and Abraham and Hagar and their sons, Isaac and Ishmael. You know this story. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, the nation of Israel. And that God would give him a son to be the heir to this great nation. At ninety years of age Abraham still doesn't have a son. This is a problem. And Sarah says, you're not kidding it's a problem! It's a big problem.

b. So Sarah comes up with Plan B. Sarah says to Abraham, I'm too old to have a baby, God's promise to give us a child. Why don't you do this? Why don't you take my assistant, my handmaiden, Hagar, and she'll be a surrogate mother and you have a baby through her? Abraham goes, Great idea! Great idea, Sarah!

c. So Hagar gets pregnant with Abraham's child. This is not God's plan. This is Sarah's plan. But the little baby is born and he's a beautiful little baby and they name him Ishmael. Ishmael begins to grow up and Abraham holds up Ishmael before God and says, "God, you have given me the promised boy!" And God says, "Huh-uh! That's not my plan. That's Sarah's plan. I love Ishmael and he's a good kid and I'm going to make him a great nation too, but he's not the promised miracle boy!"

d. Later by a miracle, Sarah does get pregnant and she has a little boy named Isaac who becomes the father of the Jewish nation. By the way, Ishmael becomes the father of the Arab nations. Ishmael is the father of all the Arab nations today.

e. Sarah gets upset and she starts getting jealous and she's thinking, Ishmael's a little bit older, he's the first born. He's probably going to get the inheritance. Abraham's going to favor him. She gets jealous and she kicks out Hagar and her young baby son: "You guys are out of here. You're no longer my assistant. Get out of here." And she kicks them out into the desert.

f. We pick the story up in Genesis 21:14. It says this *"Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water [they made canteens out of animal skins in those days] and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. [He's kicking them out of the house] She went on her own and wandered in the desert of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy Ishmael under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, 'I cannot watch the boy*

die. [They're not only starving to death, they're dying of thirst. They're out in the desert. I cannot watch this boy die.] *And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.* [This is a very tragic scene of rejection.] *God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, 'What's the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift up the boy and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.'* And he did. All the Arab nations came out of Ishmael.

g. We pick up the story in verse 19 on your outline. *"Then God opened her eyes [circle "opened her eyes"] and she saw a well of water. So she went and she filled the skin [the canteen] with water and gave the boy a drink."* As you know, they survived that event and she went on and Ishmael became the father of all the Arabs.

f. Here's the point: She had the solution right in front of her – this well of water – but she couldn't see it until God opened her eyes, illuminated her mind, helped her see it from a different perspective.

g. I don't know what problem you're going through right now. But you've got problems in your life that you're going, "Frankly, I don't see any way around this. There's no answer to it. I can't see the solution. It just looks like one dead end after another. I cannot see the solution." You need to have your mind illuminated. You need the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind. You need him to open your spiritual eyes so you can see the solution in God's Word. You're never going to see the solution to your problem on your own. You've tried and you go, I don't see how were going to get out of this one. But you need to see it from God's point of view. When God opens your eyes you see the resources that were literally right there in front of you, but you didn't see them.

Story number two: The second benefit of having your eyes spiritually opened is

2. I see the barrier to my progress. I not only see the solution to my problems but I see the barrier to my progress.

a. You have some things you've been wanting to do in your life. You've been wanting to start a business, or start a family, or get out of debt, or you've had some goal or some dream. You've been trying to make progress on it but you just keep bumping up against an invisible wall. And you're going, "I don't get it. I'm trying the best I can. I'm doing the best I can. I'm not making any progress." **You need to have your eyes opened, your eyes illuminated.**

b. The story that gives a good example of this is in Numbers 22. It's the story of a guy named Balaam. Balaam was a prophet of God, he was a man of God. But Balaam decided and agreed to help the bad guys. And this ticked God off. He goes, "Wait minute, Balaam. You're supposed to be my representative and you're going to go help the bad guys?" So as Balaam starts on his journey to go help the bad guys, God puts an angel in his pathway and blocks his progress. Only Balaam can't see the angel. So he doesn't know what's going on. But his barrier to his progress was invisible and he could not see it.

c. So he's heading off on this journey to go help the bad guys. We pick up the story in verse 22 of Numbers 22. *"But God was furious that Balaam was going, so he sent the angel of the Lord to stand in the road to block his way... Balaam's donkey suddenly saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand [The donkey could see him but Balaam didn't] and the donkey bolted off the road into a field, [out of fear] but Balaam beat the donkey and turned it back on the road. [This is funny. Balaam can't see what's going on but the donkey can. There's an angel in the road with a big sword and he goes, I'm not going there. The donkey's pretty smart; he goes off into the ditch. And Balaam gets angry and beats the donkey. It's not the donkey's fault. He can see what's out there.]*

d. So the second time it says, *"Then the angel of the Lord stood at a place where the road narrowed [It is the second time] between two vineyard walls. [It's very narrow and the angel of the Lord stood in the middle.] When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing there, it tried to squeeze by [the angel] and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall."*

e. Listen closely, **we always get hurt when we try to do something that God doesn't want us to do.** We always get our foot crushed. We always get hurt. Balaam doesn't see what's going on. He looks at the donkey: "Why did you do that? Why did you run against the wall and break my leg?" *"So Balaam beat the donkey again."* He's angry!

f. Third time: *"Then the angel of the Lord moved farther down the road and stood in a place so narrow that the donkey could not get by at all. This time when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down under Balaam. [Smart donkey! I give up. He just collapsed and gives up.] In a fit of rage [the Bible says] Balaam beat it again with his staff."*

g. We pick up the story in verse 31. *"Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, [Circle that phrase. This is illumination: "He opened Balaam's eyes." and now Balaam saw what the problem was.] He saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn."* No way, Jose! You're not passing this way!

h. So what does Balaam do now that his eyes are open? *"He bowed low and fell facedown."* and he worships God.

i. That is very strange, strange story. But here's the point. You have plans in your life that aren't working out. You try to go this way and you get blocked. You try to go *this* way and you get blocked. And you try to go this way and you get blocked. And you're getting mad at everybody else. You're mad at your wife. You're mad at your husband. You're beating your donkey. You're taking it out on your kids. You're talking about your boss behind his back and on and on and on. You're mad at everybody because you can't see what the real problem is.

j. God is blocking that issue. He is trying to keep you from making a serious mistake. God's saying, "I'm not going to let you go down that road. No matter how much you beat your head against the wall I'm not going to let you go down that road because I love you too much." And you're going to be stopped by it.

k. When your progress is being blocked, you've got one of two choices. Beat the donkey or let God open your eyes. You can either get mad at everybody around you and spiritually vomit on them and take it out on your kids and your husband or your wife and everybody else. And you're just so sick and tired and you're blaming everybody for your problem. But the problem is you can't see the problem. The barrier is God is not going to let you do that. Because he loves you too much.

l. But when God opens my eyes, I can see the solution to my problems. And when God opens my eyes, I can see the barrier to my progress. And then I go, oh... that makes sense.

Story number three, when God opens my eyes,

3. I see the defense for what's attacking me. I see the defense, how God is going to defend me for the things that are attacking me.

a. Everybody feels under attack at different points in their life. You may feel under attack right now. Maybe you're under attack by germs and you're getting sick. Maybe you feel like you're under attack by the economy. You've lost your job or you've lost your income or you've lost your retirement. Or you feel like you're under attack by former friends. Or you feel like you're under attack by your own family. Or you feel under attack by your own mind, and the fears that are beating you up and you feel like you're being beaten down and you're under attack. And you think you're all alone and you don't know what God is going to do in that.

b. There's a great story in 2 Kings 6. It's the story of Elisha and the Arameans. In the Old Testament there was a nation called Aram. The nation of Aram was always at war with Israel. They're always going to war with Israel. But every time they would attack Israel God would tell Elisha, who was the prophet of God in Israel, what the king of Aram's plans were, the war plans, in advance. So Elisha would go tell the king of Israel, and each time the king of Israel would kick the king of Aram's rear! He's winning time after time.

c. This gets very old to the king of Aram. He goes, "I can't win. No matter what brilliant battle plan I come up with, somebody's finding out." He thinks there's a traitor in his own people who's sharing the secrets. And he goes, we've got to plug this leak.

d. We pick the story up in verse 10 of 2 Kings 6, "*This happened [this leak happened] several times so the king of Aram became very upset over it. He called in his officers and he demanded 'Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?' 'It's not us, my lord,' one of the officers replied. [It's that Elisha.] 'Elisha, the prophet of Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom! [He knows your plans before you tell us.] The king said, 'You go find where Elisha is, and we're going to send troops to seize him!' [We're going to send our whole army after this one guy. We're going to stop this leak. You go find out where he is.] The report came back, 'Elisha is at Dothan' [Dothan was a little town in Israel.] So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. [where Elisha was, Dothan] When Elisha's servant [a guy named Gehazi] got up early the next morning and went outside, he saw the city surrounded by troops, by chariots, and by horses. [And Elisha's servant has a panic attack. He goes, "We're*

a goner. It's us against all these attackers.”] *He runs back in and he tells Elisha. ‘What do we do now?’ he cries out to Elisha. Elisha replied, ‘Don’t be afraid! For there are more on our side than on theirs.’* [Gehazi’s going “From a human standpoint that’s not true. There’s like several thousand soldiers out there and there’s you and me. What are you talking about there’s more on our side than on theirs? It’s just us two against this army.”

e. We pick up the story on verse 17 “*Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, open his eyes [circle that phrase. He’s talking about his servant Gehazi] open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked out and he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha!*”

f. This is the angel army that he did not see from a physical standpoint: He’s going, ‘Behind the scenes, I can’t see this, but there are evidently some supernatural forces here that are going to protect us that I haven’t been able to see before.’ He sees it. Now, he’s not afraid any more. **You lose your fear when God is near.**

g. The rest of the story says this: “*As the Aramean army advanced toward them Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, please make them blind.’ And the Lord did as Elisha asked. So Elisha went out and he told them, ‘You have come the wrong way!’* [This is funny! He’s talking to the enemy army that’s come to capture him in Dothan. They’re all blind now and he says, you have come the wrong way.] *This isn’t the right city!* [He’s deceiving them, flat out deceiving them. This isn’t the right city.] *Follow me, and I’ll take you to the man you’re looking for.’* [And he was standing there right in front of them.] *And he led them to Samaria!*” ...What’s in Samaria? The king of Israel and the massive Israeli army.

h. So here’s Elisha leading an enemy army that has all been blinded. One guy leading them right into the hands of the Israeli army.

i. It says “*As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, now open their eyes and let them see.’ And the Lord did, and they discovered that they were in Samaria!*” We ain’t in Kansas, Dorothy! When my eyes are open, I open them up and all of a sudden I’m not in Dothan; I’m in Samaria. And I’m surrounded by the Israeli army. This is hilarious!

j. “*When Elisha’s king, the king of Israel, saw the captive enemy army, he shouted to Elisha, ‘Should I kill them?’ ‘Of course not!’ Elisha told him. ‘Do we kill prisoners of war?’ [No] Give them food and drink and send them home again.’ So the king of Israel made a great feast for the Aramean army and then he sent them home to their king. After that, the Aramean raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.*” I would too!

k. The easiest way to get rid of an enemy is to turn them into a friend. So instead of, assassinate all these guy and make enemies for another generation so that the sons would want to come back and get retaliation, be nice to them. Feed them and send them home. The best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn them into a friend.

l. Here's the point: You've got things that are attacking you and you're going to panic about it. You're going to feel overwhelmed. There's a whole lot more against me than just little ol' me.

m. God needs to open your eyes and see all the resources on your side that he has commanded to take care of you. There are angels around you all the time. You cannot see them but they are around you all the time. God's forces are there to protect you. God says when I see from his viewpoint I can see the defense and all of a sudden my fear goes down dramatically.

Fourth story. The fourth benefit of being able to see with spiritual eyes, to have my mind illuminated is,

4.I see how God is walking with me. When God opens my eyes I see how God is walking with me. **He's been with me all along, I just didn't see it.**

a.I don't know what you're going through right now. You may have felt like you're lonely, you're alone, you're out there by yourself, you're fighting this battle on your own. You don't think that God is with you, that God's a million miles away. You're dead wrong! He's been with you all along, you just can't see it until your mind is illuminated.

b. Luke 24 is a good story to let you know that God is with you. This is the story that happened on the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Easter Sunday, the very first Easter Sunday.

c.What had happened is over the past seventy-two hours a lot had happened. Jesus Christ had been arrested. He had been whipped and beaten and tortured. He had been crucified. He died. And they buried him in a tomb. All of the disciples, they're crushed. Their dream is finished – "We thought this guy was God. We thought he was the Messiah. Now that they've killed him they're probably going to kill us," and they're all fleeing for their lives. They're running away. Nobody knows what's happened. They're confused, they're in grief. They're sorrowing. They're sobbing. And they're fearful because they think, they killed Jesus, they're going to kill us too.

d. Then on Easter morning some women go to the tomb and they find the tomb has been broken open, that the body is gone, and the angels there are saying, He is risen. This is too much to believe. I just can't believe it. So they go back and they tell the disciples. The disciples come out and they go, Yeah, it's true. The body's gone. But we can't believe it.

e. This rumor starts spreading all over that Jesus is risen. But nobody has actually seen him yet. Over the next forty days Jesus appeared multiple times, walked around Jerusalem and at one time talked to a crowd of five hundred people. That would have been weird. If I was one of the persecutors of Jesus and all of a sudden he's walking down the street two weeks later ... he's back. This is why within a few years there were a hundred thousand Christians in the church of Jerusalem. Why? Because there were so many eyewitnesses. It wasn't just a few people who saw him. He was walking around Jerusalem for forty days and a hundred thousand

people, by the year 20, had come to Christ; and the Jerusalem church had over a hundred thousand people because of all these witnesses who had seen Jesus.

f. But this is later that day and a couple of Jesus' disciples are walking on the road to Emmaus. They're getting out of town. They're leaving Jerusalem, in fear for their life. But they're grieving and they're sorrowing. All of a sudden Jesus shows up and appears to them and starts walking with them. But because they're in so much grief they don't even recognize him. Their eyes are closed. They can't see it. They don't even notice who's with them.

g. We pick this story up in verse 15 of Luke 24. *"Suddenly, Jesus himself came along and joined them [these two disciples] and began walking beside them. But they didn't know who he was, because God kept them from recognizing him. Jesus said, 'You seem to be in a deep discussion about something, what are you so concerned about?' [Because they're talking about the crucifixion and all that's going on and the chaos in Jerusalem.] They stopped short, sadness written on their faces. Then Cleopas said, 'You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened in the last few days.' Jesus said, 'What things?' [He's playing dumb! Obviously he knows what's going on. Jesus was the center of attention. He goes, What things?] And the disciples said, 'The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,' they said. 'He was a prophet who did wonderful miracles. He was a mighty teacher, highly regarded by both God and all the people. But our leading priests and other religious leaders arrested him and handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. We had thought he was the Messiah. [We thought this guy was God. But he's dead now. We thought he was the Messiah] who had come to rescue Israel. That all happened three days ago,' they continued. 'Then some women were at his tomb early this morning, and came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and that they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, Jesus' body was gone, just as the women had said.'"*

h. So they're all confused. They haven't seen Jesus. He's walking right there with them, but they haven't seen him yet. They don't know what to believe. *"Then Jesus said, 'You are such foolish people. You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted by the prophets that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering into his time of glory?' Then Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses [That's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy] and all of the prophets, [that's the Old Testament] explaining what all the Scriptures said about him."*

i. A lot of people think that the Old Testament is about Israel and the New Testament is about Jesus. Wrong. It's all about Jesus from cover to cover. This is a Jesus book. The first part of the book tells you he's coming and you see Jesus in allusions and in analogies and in metaphors and in prophecies and in statements and in predictions. He's all through every chapter of the Bible. Then we find in the Gospels where you hear the story of Jesus. Then we have the book of Acts which is what happened after Jesus goes back to heaven and the church grows. Then all the letters which is how we're supposed to live since then. But it's all about Jesus.

j. It says, *"By this time they [these two disciples of Jesus] were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus would have gone on, but they begged him to stay the night with them,*

since it was getting late. So he [Jesus] went home with them. [They still don't recognize him.] As they sat down to eat, Jesus took a small loaf of bread, [just like he did in the Last Supper] asked God's blessing on it, [just like in the Last Supper] broke it, then gave it to them. [verse 31] Then their eyes were opened [Circle that phrase – "their eyes were open"] and they recognized him..."

k. Holy guacamole! It's Jesus! We've been walking with him all day. We've been talking with him. We've been telling him what we saw and he's been explaining to us the meaning of it. Now he's been eating dinner with us. What in the world? Their eyes were open.

l. *"Then their eyes were open and hey recognized him, and he disappears from their sight."* That would be a mindblower. The guy you think is God is crucified and died. We missed that one. We thought that guy was God! Then we hear he's been resurrected, but we really don't believe it. Then a stranger walks along with us and then he breaks the bread and all of a sudden we realize it's him. It's him! And as soon as we recognize it's him, bam! He disappears.

m. That was illumination. In their grief they could not see that Jesus was with them. They'd had this enormous loss and they couldn't see. They just couldn't see it. They needed illumination.

n. I don't know what you've lost this last year. You may have lost a loved one. You may have lost your health. You may have lost your job. You may have lost an important relationship or a big deal, and you are grieving. And you cannot see that every step of the way Jesus has been walking with you. You have never been alone. You have never been by yourself. That God is with you walking, but your eyes are blinded. You can't see it.

Now do you realize how important illumination is? Batteries included. Without illumination you just look at the book and a lot of it doesn't make sense. It's just words on a page. Great story.

But when God opens your eyes, Bam! I see the solution to my problems. Bam! I see the barrier to my progress. Bam! I see the protection that God has from all the things that are attacking me. And bam! I see he's with me all the time.

FIVE THINGS TO GET YOUR EYES OPEN. Five things to get your eyes open, to cooperate with the Holy Spirit so he can illuminate, so he can photizo, so he can enlighten your mind.

1. This one is obviously basic. **I must begin a relationship with Jesus Christ.**

a. That's the starting point. If you don't have this one you are spiritually blind and you don't have any hope of seeing things from God's point of view. You've got to get the connection first. You can't just know about Jesus. You've got to know him. You've got to have a relationship. You've got to be born again. You've got to be saved. You must accept his salvation.

b. Until you begin that relationship, you're blind. Sorry. You can only see from a human viewpoint.

c. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2: 14 *"The man without the Spirit [that means he's not born again] does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, [underline "cannot understand them"] because they are spiritually discerned."* This is why it is nonsense to expect unbelievers to act like believers until they are. You can make all the laws in the world to make people act and do the right thing but they're not going to do it because it doesn't make sense. It just doesn't make sense. My eyes are blinded until I have the connection with God.

d. 2 Corinthians 4:4 *"The devil who rules this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe. They cannot see the light of the Good News..."* They just can't see it. I didn't see it, you didn't see it. None of us saw it until we stepped across the line. Then all of a sudden, boom! The blinders came off. That's why Jesus says in John 3:3 *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God [you can't see what God's doing] until he is born again."*

e. If you haven't had that yet, we're going to settle that one at the end of this service today. So hang on!

2. The second thing you have to do is **I must ask God in faith to open my eyes.**

a. I pray Psalm 119:18 *"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your laws."* That's this week's memory verse. Psalm 119:18 *"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."* Psalm 119:18

b. Why did I have you memorize that last week? Because I want you to be able to pray it every day when you open your Bible. It's the first thing you should pray. Before you even read the Bible, you need batteries included. You need the illumination and you need to say, *"Lord, before I even read this, open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law, in your Word."*

c. Here's the point: There are wonderful things in this book. It's filled with wonder-filled things. But when you don't see them, it's not the Bible's fault. It's because you're blind. You can't see the wonder-filled things until your eyes have been opened. So if your eyes are not opened you can read the Bible and you don't get it. It just seems dull. I just don't get it. Because you're not seeing. It takes more than revelation. It takes illumination.

d. *"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."* Psalm 119:18. So if you have a hard time remembering it, you have a real problem. This is not like memorizing the Gettysburg Address. It's half a sentence.

e. And by the way you memorize with your ears not with your eyes. If you just read a verse over and over you're never going to memorize it. You have to say it aloud. It is by saying it aloud over and over, while you're in the car driving, while you're shaving, taking a shower,

whatever- don't say it in your sleep because you'll wake up somebody probably. But you memorize through your ear.

f. When you ask God in faith *"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law,"* you have to ask in faith. James 1:5 *"If any of you lacks wisdom, [Lord, I need wisdom on this business deal... I need wisdom with my kids... I need wisdom on my health... I need wisdom whether to say yes or no, whether to hold on or let go...] if any of you lack wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be [promise] be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt."* I ask God in faith.

g. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 7:7 *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be open to you."* Ask, seek and knock. First letter – ASK. He's just saying you need to ask.

h. What is God's promise? Psalm 32:8 *"I will instruct you and [I will] teach you in the way you should go; [I'll show you which way to go.] I will counsel you and [I will] watch over you."* But I've got to ask in faith for God to open my eyes.

3. I come with a humble attitude.

a. If I come to the Word of God and go, "I've got it all figured out. I don't really need God's help on this marriage issue... I don't really need God's help on this financial issue..." Then you're not going to get anything. Your eyes are going to be closed. You come with a humble attitude.

b. Psalm 25:9 *"He guides [and that's what you need. You need guidance this week] the humble [If you'll be humble God will guide you] in what is right and teaches them his way."*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *"Trust in the Lord [not in yourself] with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; [Here's what I think I ought to do.] in all your ways acknowledge him, [acknowledge him in your sexual ways, acknowledge him in your financial ways, acknowledge in your career ways, in all your ways acknowledge him] and he will make your paths straight.* He'll point you on the path to success.

c. I ask God in faith to open my eyes. I come with a humble attitude.

4. I cleanse my heart of sin and conflict.

a. I cannot get my eyes open if my body and mind is full of junk. That's why the Bible says in Matthew 5:8 Jesus said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."* You can't see it, unless your heart is pure.

b. That doesn't mean perfect. If only God illuminated the minds of people who are perfect, nothing would happen. None of us are perfect. Pure doesn't mean perfect. Pure in heart means I'm caught up today on my confession. There's nothing between me and God. Yeah God

I agree that was wrong and you're right. I just confess. I don't allow the garbage to pile up in my life. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, they will see God."*

c.If I'm over here and watching or reading a bunch of pornography and then I come and say, "God, I need some instruction about what to do in my job." It isn't going to happen; it just isn't going to happen. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God."*

d.If I'm out here filling my mind with garbage, trashy novels and magazines and movies and TV shows and just junk; and I'm filling my mind with bitterness and lust and resentment and guilt and anger and jealousy and envy. All that stuff in my mind, I'm not going to see it. I must have a clear conscience. I must cleanse my heart of sin. And not just sin but conflict.

e.1 John 2:11 *"Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and he walks around in the darkness. He does not know where he's going,"* Whoa! You want to know why you don't know where you're going. Because you've got unresolved conflict in your life. That's why you don't know where you're going. Because you're in darkness. Whoever hates his brother is in darkness. Walks around in darkness. He doesn't know where he's going... *"...because the darkness has blinded him."*

f.That means if I'm out of whack relationally, I'm not going to get anything out of the Word. If I have a big argument with my wife and then I sit down and say, "God, I need you to teach me from your Word," it isn't going to happen. It's just going to be print on the page. I'm going to read the stories, I'm going to read the verses, it's not going to do anything. I'm not going to have the light come on. I'm not going to have the ah-ha! Eureka! That makes sense! I've got it! Why? Because there's relational conflict. The Bible says you cannot be right with God and wrong with others. You cannot love God and hate others. You cannot be reconciled to God and not be reconciled with others. That's why the Bible says if you've got something wrong with a brother, when you come to church and you bring an offering, you've got something wrong with somebody, you leave your offering there. You go make it right with that person. Then you come back and you finish your worship. Because you cannot worship God while you're out of whack with somebody else.

g.So if you really want your mind open, you want to see the solution to your problems and the barriers to your progress, and the defenses to your attackers, and the fact that God is with you, you may need to make a phone call this afternoon. Or write a letter. You may need to forgive somebody. You may need to ask forgiveness. You may need to let somebody off the hook.

h.But you say I can't let go of that grudge. You don't hold a grudge. It holds you. It holds you in a self-imposed prison of pain. Let it go. Because until you do, you are blind. And you cannot see with spiritual eyes.

Ask God to open my eyes. Come with a humble attitude. Cleanse my heart of sin and conflict.

5. I commit in advance to do what God says.

a. This is unqualified, unconditional obedience. I say, “God, I’m getting ready to sit down here. I need you to teach me what I need to do this week with my kids, with my wife, with my family, my business. I need you to teach me. I’m telling you in advance that I’m going to do what you want me to do even when it doesn’t make sense, even when I don’t understand it, even when I don’t agree, even when it isn’t popular, even when it isn’t easy. I’m saying yes, even before you tell me what to do.”

b. Psalm 119:33-34 *“Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them...”* See the promise? Commitment? I will keep them. You teach me and I’ll do it. *“Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.”* Whatever you show me I’m going to act on it.

c. Why? Because acting on it is the bottom line. And God’s not going to give you step two until you act on step one. So James 1:22 is today’s memory verse for this week *“Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”* James 1:22

d. Remember you memorize verse by saying it aloud. You say the reference at the beginning and the end. James 1:22 *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!”* James 1:22.

e. By the way, what is James 1:22? *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!”* James 1:22.

Prayer:

If you’ve never invited Christ into your life say “Jesus Christ, I open my life to you. I need to be born again. I need to be spiritually renewed. I need to be saved. I’ve known about you but I’ve never put my trust in you. I’ve never asked you into my life. I’m doing it now. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. For forgiving all the wrong things I’ve ever done. I want to learn to love you. I ask you to open my eyes, God, to see the solutions to the problems that are right in front of me. Open my eyes to see the barriers that are holding back the progress, even if it’s me. Open my eyes Lord, to see the people that are attacking me, that really you’ve got it taken care of. I don’t have to defend myself. You’ll defend me. I can trust you. Lord, in all of my loss and my grief and my confusion, open my eyes to see that there has never been a second you weren’t walking with me. You’ve been right there with me all along, even when I couldn’t see it. In faith I ask you to open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things in your law. I want to come to you every day with a humble attitude. I don’t want to trust in my way or my own understanding. But I want to acknowledge you in every area of my life. I ask you to clean out my heart of all the junk and garbage and sin and bad attitudes and help me to make reconciliation in the conflicts in my life. I don’t want to be walking around in the dark. I don’t want to be not knowing where I’m going. So I’m telling you right now in advance that I want to do whatever you tell me to, whether I understand it or not. Because you’re God, and I’m not. I don’t want to merely listen to the Word and so deceive myself. I want to do what it says. In your name I pray. Amen.